

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 OMB-01 ACDA-05 SY-05

SCS-03 SCA-01 OPR-02 AID-05 SAM-01 OC-05 CCO-00 /115 W

----- 120788

P R 061120Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4912

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMMBASSY BAMAKO 706

AMMBASSY DAKAR 3225

OKMDQ/AMEMBASSY MADRID 234

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0016

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MMOL MOPS MR NJRSS SP

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN SAHARA

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 2653

1. SPANISH CHARGE (WHO HAD JUST BEEN IN CONTACT WITH HIS CONSULATE IN NOUADHIBOU) REPORTED 5 JAN THAT MAURITANIAN FORCES WERE CONTINUING THEIR MOVEMENT NORTHWARD INTO SAHARA. HEAD OF MAURITANIAN COLUMN WAS LOCATED AT TEN KILOMETERS SOUTH OF
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WMISERT (2235N, 1415W) AS OF NOON 5 JAN. THUS FAR DURING ADVANCE

ALONG TRACK NORTH OF TICHLA MAURITANIANS HAVE ENCOUNTERED LITTLE IF ANY RESISTANCE, BUT SPANISH CHARGE ASSERTED GIRM FORCES COULD BE IN FOR SERIOUS FIGHTING AS THEY APPROACH AUSERT. ACCORDING SPANISH DIPLOMAT, MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN SURROUNDING AUSERT IS IDEAL FOR AMBUSHES AND IS CURRENTLY HELD BY SIZABLE NUMBER OF POLISARIO UNITS. HE ALSO CLAIMS POLISARIO IS DUG IN IN STRENGTH AT AARGUB WERE TICHLA/AUSERT TRACK COMES OUT ON WADI DHEHAB BAY ACROSS FROM SICNEROS.

2. SPANISH CHARGE REPORTED THAT ALL SPANISH MILITARY FORCES WILL BE WITHDRAWN FROM VILLA CISNEROS AND SPANISH SAHARA DURING PERIOD 5-9 JAN. HE SAID TIMING OF DEPARTURE WAS NOW IN HANDS OF MILITARY COMMANDERS WHO WOULD EVACUATE PERSONNEL AS QUICKLY AS WIND AND OCEAN CURRENTS WOULD PERMIT AIRCRAFT AND VESSELS TO REACH CANARY ISLANDS. ALTHOUGH SPANISH HAVE PROMISED MAURITANIANS THEY WILL TURN OVER VILLA CISNEROS ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS IF MAURITANIANS ARRIVE PRIOR SPANISH DEPARTURE, SPANISH WILL NOT WAIT AROUND. THIS IS WHY, SPANISH CHARGE EXPLAINS, MAURITANIANS ARE PUSHING AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TOWARD VILLA CISNEROS.

3. IN ANOTHER MILITARY DEVELOPMENT, VARIOUS SOURCES REPORT POLISARIO ATTACK ON NORTHWESTERN MAURITANIAN CITY OF Z
XEW (2240N, 1235W) 31 DEC- 1 JAN SITE OF COMINORD (EX MIFERMA) IRON ORE MINES. POLISARIO ATTEMPTED TO HIT POWER PLANT, AIRPORT, AND IRON MINES BUT DID NO SERIOUS DAMAGE0) ALTHOUGH ATTACK WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN BY AS MANY AS 90 POLISARIONBSI USING SMALL ARMS AND MORTARS, SPANISH AND FRENCH EMBASSIES REPORT THAT ONLY ONE MAURITANIAN (AND NO EXPATRIATES) WAS INJURED SLIGHTLY. FRENCH AMBASSADOR STATES THAT NORMAL OPENING OF NEXT DAY'S MINING OPERATIONS WAS DELAYED ONLY TWO HOURS, AND THAT FRENCH NATIONALS CALMLY TOOK WHOLE EPISODE IN STRIDE.

4. COMMENT: AS MAURITANIAN MILITARY CONTINUES ITS PUSH TOWARD VILLA CISNEROS, ITS SUPPLY LINES ARE GROWING IN LENGTH AND ARE SUBJECT TO ATTACK. MAURITANIANS ARE UNDOUBTED-
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LY GOING TO ENCOUNTER INCREASING DIFFICULTY IN RESUPPLYING THEIR UNITS IN THE FIELD, AND IN ADMINISTERING AND CONTROLLING THE TERRITORY THEY HAVE ALREADY "REUNIFIED". MOREOVER, SINCE IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT MAURITANIANS WILL REACH VILLA CISNEROS PRIOR TO SPANISH DEPARTURE (ESPECIALLY IF THEY CONTINUE ONLY BY ROAD), THEY ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO DISCOVER POLISARIO HAS ALREADY OCCUPIED CITY AND IS DETERMINED TO RESIST ADVANCING IMPERIALISTS EVEN MORE

STAUNCHLY THAN THEY DID AT LA GUERA DURING NOVEMBER AND
DECEMBER.HANDYSIDE

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